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GENERATION Y'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study the role of Generation Y in expressing their problems, engaging the government through the media especially the social media, and in deciding and voicing their views in the ballot box during the 2008 and 2013 general elections. Generation Y has utilized the social media after the traditional media, like the print and broadcasting media, give them limited space for them to engage with the government and the oppositions. Therefore, a survey had been conducted in studying the perception of Generation Y towards media and political participation. This research was able to gather 1,029 respondents from the age 15 till 25 years old. In overall, the findings show that this generation was a little bit sceptical on the new media but they believe that the new media can be the best tool for the youth to engage more with the government. Therefore, it is clear that the result of the survey election is in line with the importance of social media and Generation Y in dominating the public sphere in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Social media, Generation Y, general election, youth, middle class*

PENYERTAAN POLITIK GENERASI Y DAN SOSIAL MEDIA DI MALAYSIA

Artikel ini mengkaji tentang peranan Generasi Y untuk menyatakan masalah mereka, untuk menglibatkan mereka dengan kerajaan melalui media, dan untuk membuat keputusan dan manghasratkan pendapat mereka dalam peti undi semasa pilihanraya umum 2008 dan 2013. Generasi Y telah mendahulukan sosial media dari media tradisional, seperti media cetak dan media penyiaran yang memberi mereka ruang terhad untuk melibatkan diri dengan kerajaan mahupun pembangkang. Kajian survei telah di jalankan untuk melihat persepsi Generasi Y terhadap penyertaan media dan politik. Kajian ini telah mengumpul 1,029 responden berumur 15 hingga 25 tahun. Secara keseluruhan, dapatan kajian menunjukkan generasi ini merasa ragu-ragu dengan media baru namun mempercayai bahawa media baru boleh menjadi alat terbaik untuk melibatkan diri dengan pihak kerajaan. Keputusan kajian survey didapati selari dengan kepentingan sosial media dan Generasi Y dalam mendominasi sfera awam di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: *Media sosial, Genersai Y, pilihanraya umum, belia, kelas pertengahan*

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the general election in 2008, Malaysia's Generation Y voters from the age 21 till 30 years old appear to be getting impatient with what they perceive as BN's reluctance and resistance to change. As reported by the *New Straits Times* in the 26 August 2008 Permatang Pauh by-election, more than 90 percent of voters aged below 30 years old voted for Anwar Ibrahim, the opposition leader (Zubaidah, 2009, p. 16). One key reason for this was young, Internet-savvy voters obtaining their news, information chiefly from the pro-opposition alternative media, which Generation Y perceives as more credible than the mainstream media. In the Kuala Terengganu by-election, which BN lost, detailed voting data indicated that the ruling coalition had again lost the most support from among those aged under 35 (Zubaidah, 2009, p. 16).

Political apathy among Generation Y is long gone. The young are aware of what is happening around them and have varied reasons to vote for the opposition. The young non-Malays cannot accept the New Economic Polity (NEP), considering it as benefiting only the Malays, while young, educated Malays concerned with good governance, human rights and democratic ideals view the ruling United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the National Front (BN, Barisan Nasional) as corrupt (Zubaidah, 2009, p. 16). According to

Zubaidah Abu Bakar (2009), youngsters tend to favour the opposition because they have more liberal views of democracy, with less preference for race-based politics, which explains the appeal of multiracial People Justice Party (PKR). Generation Y also do not feel indebted to the government that struggled to achieve independence half a century ago. BN leaders should realise by now that campaigning on the basis of track records no longer works with Generation Y voters. Therefore in targeting this group, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed said that the Government emphasised the development of 11.4 million youths, mostly from Generation Y who make up 46 percent of the nation, it was important for Generation Y workers to have access to companies with good training, exposure and salaries (Sukumaran, 2012). The government realised that Generation Y is now the determinant factor in the future of Malaysian politics which needs to be targeted by all political parties.

Now, social media like Blogs, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *YouTube* have become trendy, cheap and easy to access for the youths from the category of Generation Y. Realising on how essential the social media to young voters and this generation in the election, Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak said that the 13th General Election is the Malaysia's first social media election. After launching the Malaysia Social Media Week 2013 summit on 27 February 2013, Najib emphasised that 'Of course, it (social media) will not be the biggest factor in the elections, but it is certainly increasing the tempo of political debate' (Lim, 2013, p. 1). Therefore, this paper examines the impact of Generation Y's perceptions towards media and their utilisation of social media which affect their political participation.

GENERATION Y

Generation Y has been referred to as the 'Millennial', 'Internet (or dot.com) Generation', 'Nexters' and 'Echo Boomers' (Ganesan, 2012). A marketing magazine called the *Advertising Age* coined the term 'Generation Y' since the early 1990s in order to differentiate the group from Generation X (Constantine, 2010). There are many studies conducted to classify on who makes up Generation Y. Martin and Turley (2004) define Generation Y as individuals born between 1980 and 1994. However the definition used by Javelin Strategy & Research (2011) is by overlapping 20 years period that is, baby boomers (1945-1965), Gen X (1961- 1981) and Gen Y (1979-1999). This explanation puts Generation Y between the age of 12 and 32 in the year 2011. In Malaysia, people in the age group between 15 and 29 years old has grown from 5.6 million in 1999 to 6.9 million in 2009, it is also equivalent to 26.9 percent of Malaysia's population (US Census Bureau, 2009).

With regards to the characteristic of the group, Martin (2005) argues that the Generation Y cohort is technology savvy, independent, self-reliant and entrepreneurial thinkers. Generation Y are also considered as well-educated, confident, passionate, upbeat,

and socially conscious with high integrity (Geyzel, 2009). Halstead and Marie (2006) in their research have identified three characteristics unique to this and these characteristics may be the factor that influence Generation Y saving consumption patterns. The characteristics are: (1) Greater racial and ethnic diversity; (2) more personal independence than prior generations due to the Internet and the rise in divorce; and (3) greater optimism than Generation X about money and job security (Ganesan, 2012). In Malaysia, Generation Y is the product of Malaysia's success story in the 1980s and 1990s where there was political stability, economic growth and social prosperity during the administration of Mahathir Mohamad, the fourth prime minister of Malaysia. Definitely, this group is more educated, technology savvy and belong to the middle class. As they grow to adulthood, they will give significant impact in the public sphere.

However, youth development faces challenges and contradictions. In one aspect, Generation Y is recognised as a national asset that will determine the future progress of the nation. In another context, Generation Y was blamed, especially by the media as an immature group who constantly challenges the norms of society, hence denying them social responsibility. Welch et al. (2002), Minnebo and Eggermont (2007) argued that media portrayal of Generation Y in a consistently negative fashion, further accentuates this arising contradiction. Generation Y is pictured as problematic and frequently involved in negative acts, without giving equal portrayal to popularise youth development potentials. According to Penuel (1995, p. 1), 'regardless of competence, youth is constructed in our society as immature and manipulable for the purposes of development'. This is not helped in resolving the issue of at-risk youth happening in all countries including among Generation Y in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, there is approximately one million out of 4.5 million of Generation Y population between the ages of 15 - 25 years are at-risk. According to the Malaysian Youth Index 2008, there were almost 500,000 youths between 14 - 25 years of age admitted to being involved in, at least, one social wrong-doing such as drug abuse and addiction, prostitution, gangsterism, and crime. In general, there is a little effort done in overcoming problems of at-risk-youth group. Most of the youth development programs that currently implemented are targeting youths at all levels in the society. By ignoring the at-risk-youth, the nation is reaping out the hidden potentials of approximately one million youths between the age group of 15 - 24 years or Generation Y that may be hugely beneficial to the nation building. Following is the profile of the at-risk-youth in Malaysia according to Samsudin (1995) and Rozmi (2007).

1. Come from families who are not emotionally supportive.
2. Lacking parental supervision on activities that they are involved in.
3. Deficient in social skills.
4. Low aspiration, emotional control and self-esteem.
5. Come from low-waged family.
6. Unsatisfactory living conditions.
7. Peer influence.

8. Devoid of suitable role model

The above profile substantiates the findings that the group of at-risk-youth comes from one of the marginalised communities i.e. from the low socio-economic group. Based on family socio-economic standings, there is a probability that this young generation may be deprived of realising their true potential. Contributing to this hindrance is the lack of resources in its family owing to unaffordability, low personal aspiration and self-esteem, as well as the dire lack of youth development approaches that emphasise the importance of this marginalised group.

GENERATION Y IN ELECTION

In the PricewaterhouseCoopers (2009) report and in contrast with at-risk-youth, Generation Y makes up approximately 62 percent of the Malaysia workforce in 2009. By understanding Malaysian Generation Y habit, we can see a rough picture of their saving, spending as they will have more income joining the workforce. The general election also marks the gradual coming of age of the new Malaysian middle class from the Generation Y. Powered previously by the very economic growth, a new generation of educated white-collar Malaysians was born and has finally been able to flex its political strength. Until the opposition parties put together their new moderate working alliance, the choices before this middle class were stark: either to vote for an avowedly Islamic Malay-based party, or for an avowedly secular Chinese-based one. For many this was no alternative and BN was the ultimate choice. They have grown up ripe for change, cynical of the country's illusion of harmony and equality. They are also educated and skilled, and are thus unafraid to take the chance on the opposition. The largely urban minority communities have been long felt marginalized by the government's long-running affirmative action program. The system was designed to help the Malays to catch up with the rest of the country after independence from Britain, but it has turned into a state-sponsored web of cronyism and favouritism for a few selected Malays under UMNO patronage system, paralysing the country along a racial divide. It has also built a deep resentment among the ethnic minorities, who are left to fend for themselves (Rudha, 2008).

Francis Loh explains that 'We have a new set of voters – middle class, educated, and who are very exposed to global developments, and the use of new technology. Partly because of this new generation of people, they are demanding more than development' (Pandian, 2008, p. 9). Loh also stated that 'If you compare Malaysia with neighbouring countries, the government, in a sense has done better than others but this generation demands more than development. And even with development, they want a development that is more sustainable and equitable. And they are also asking, 'What about our democratic rights?' They want more political participation, more consultation' (Pandian, 2008, p. 9). Many among those in the middle class wished to see as to whether the government could upkeep its integrity, transparency and democratic rights in the running of the government. It is clear that members of the middle class have developed interest group activities and they have lobbied

governments on particular issues such as the Gerakan Mansuh ISA (GMI) against the law of Internal Security Act (ISA) and the BERSIH on free and fair election. They have also mounted a serious and direct political challenge to a regime.

During the 13th General Election, we observed that both the ruling BN and opposition People Alliance (PR, Pakatan Rakyat), tried to lure the Generation Y with manifesto promises for votes as they know the impact of this group would give in the election. In the 2013 manifesto, BN offers 17 categories of policy with over 150 very comprehensive promises. Overall, the manifesto tried to tackle the issues of socio-economy and retained the agenda of transformation programmes especially in improving the public services. These included the continuation of the policy of attractive goodies and cash handout like BR1M. In education, BN is proposing the same protectionist policies for the vernacular schools, except that different format schools such as religious, missionary and special needs schools are included. Rather ambitiously, it also promises to increase the education standards to the top three ranked in the world, where we now stand in the bottom third. In its development and housing proposals, BN promised 1.0 million affordable houses in the span of five years. For economic growth, BN has promised 5.3 percent and the achievement of high income nation status before the year 2020. The BN also aims to secure 2 million new jobs, especially for fresh graduates. It was able to create 1 million new jobs over the past 5 years (Faizli, 2013). The number of unemployed persons in February 2013 was 398,600 persons or at the rate of 3.0 percent (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2013). There is no mention of political reform. BN just wants to maintain the status quo and promises the minor improvement in the political and bureaucratic systems. BN also a launched specific manifesto for all states in order to tackle the local issue such as free water for people in Selangor, more investments in Kedah and more development in Kelantan (Faizli, 2013).

Meanwhile, the PR wants to take an extreme measure to tackle all the socio-economic problems, as well as push for the total overhaul of the political system. If given a chance to rule Malaysia, PR will abolish lucrative Independent Power Producers (IPP) compensation methods and cessation of concessions, gradually abolish tolls starting with the North-South Highway, reduce cost of living, clamp down on cronyism, transparent contract awarding, revisit monopolistic corporate structures that allow for the exploitation of end customers, and 20 percent oil royalty to states that produced petroleum like Sabah, Sarawak, Terengganu, Kelantan and Pahang. With regard to development, PR proposes 5 new technical universities and 25 new vocational schools. They will build 125,000 affordable homes. Like the BN, PR will also build more roads and highways particularly in Kelantan and a highway connecting Sabah to Sarawak. It attempts to ensure people to receive lower fuel prices, electricity, water, lower car prices, free education, more affordable housing, abolish anti-competitive tolls and monopolies as well as the imposition of a minimum wage of RM1,100 via gradual and steady reduction of independence on foreign labours. PR also promised a 7 percent yearly economic growth.

Many of the manifesto agenda are rather similar between BN and PR but are different in the approaches to achieve them. For instance, both BN and PR claim and counter claim each other of plagiarising the manifesto. Some policies like reducing the car price are rather similar, but if looking in detail, actually BN and PR have distinctive approaches to implement it. The BN proposed to reduce car prices by 20 percent to 30 percent in five years. There is no mention of ways to tackle practices in awarding and trading of Approve Permits (APs) for cars. The PR, on the other hand, proposes the reduction of excise duty of 20 percent every year until a complete abolishment of the excise duty in 5 years and an auction of APs. The BN did not have the agenda to reduce petrol price. The PR, despite being questioned to be unsustainable, promises a reduction of 40 cents of petrol prices, to be financed by removing gas subsidies to the IPPs (Faizli, 2013). PR pledges to reform the political system by ensuring to establish an independent Election Commission (EC), a free media, and an independent judiciary, strengthen the public services, and promise an accountable and transparent government. All of these are expensive to do, but PR will take their chances for the public good.

Since the nomination day on 20 April 2013, the campaign period had started and the electorates began to know the candidates. It was fought fiercely by political parties in trying to win the votes of 13.3 million eligible voters. The most important facts are that there are at least 2.6 million first-time voters, mostly between their mid-twenties and mid-thirties, expected to cast their ballots. The majority of them were from Generation Y. According to the statistics from the Election Commission (EC), Generation Y or young voters made up to 40 percent or 5.6 million voters. The young voting population mostly intellectual urbanites which form a majority of the 3.7 million new registered voters (Faizli, 2013). Voters between the ages of 21 and 45 years old were made up of more than 8 million voters.

Based on Table 1 and data on the voters' turnout age groups, BN actually lost in all age groups especially the Generation Y from the categories of V and IV, the highest in all age groups. This finding clearly shows the pattern of voting among Youth and Generation Y during the 2013 general election. The Malays seem to support BN, but the non-Malays give their votes to PR.

Table 1 Voter Turnout and Results: National

Age Group	Ethnic Composition				Turnout by Age Group
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Other	
V	64.17%	21.74%	6.51%	7.59%	83.22%
IV	53.12%	29.28%	7.61%	10.00%	83.47%
III	48.16%	27.78%	7.17%	16.89%	84.73%
II	43.62%	38.47%	8.72%	9.19%	85.88%
I	46.93%	38.78%	7.14%	7.15%	81.35%
Total	51.68%	30.30%	7.36%	10.66%	83.77%
Age Group	BN	PR	Other	BN support along ethnicity	

				Malay	Chinese	Indian	Other
V	45.73%	52.96%	1.31%	54.25%	16.36%	34.52%	45.12%
IV	44.25%	54.25%	1.49%	56.42%	19.14%	37.11%	44.34%
III	48.08%	49.76%	2.16%	58.95%	21.66%	40.93%	48.46%
II	45.43%	53.32%	1.25%	62.88%	23.07%	42.26%	46.04%
I	48.76%	50.06%	1.17%	60.88%	27.46%	44.99%	49.56%
Total	46.43%	52.03%	1.54%	57.78%	22.06%	39.84%	46.66%

Age Group Composition:

I = Above 60; II= 51-60; III=41-50; IV= 31-40; V= **21-30**

Source: Merdeka Center (2013).

GENERATION Y AND MEDIA PARTICIPATION

Generation Y has grown up with a majority of the technological advances, such as computers and the Internet. They have established relationships with technology and strongly understand its various uses. According to Jones, this generation is considerably more likely to use social networking sites and to create profiles than those of older generations (Jones and Fox, 2010). Lenhart (2010) focused on a study about the activities surrounding this generation and agreed with Jones by concluding that 70 percent of Generation Y uses social networking sites and about 65 percent has an online profile. To further this claim, Lenhart discovered that 63 percent goes online daily to send messages to friends and receive news. Independent research has been done concerning Generation Y's dependence on social media.

Nobaya *et al.*, (2008) felt that the television broadcasting media is an influential ICT medium in educating youths to become agents of harmonious growth towards the multi races of Malaysia but with the exception that the broadcasting media has to think of more creative strategies to shape the essence of multiracial unity in Malaysia. The design of the unity campaigns in television could less focus on only giving information to being more on *infotainment* and *edutainment* where unity campaigns are merged with aspects of entertainment and education. In a time where Malaysia's youth devote a longer time watching television, therefore the opportunity should be used to its maximum by the broadcasting media players in Malaysia. At the same time, the youths of Malaysia should see this phenomenon that is happening to their generation as a benchmark of what they can contribute and their roles in ensuring the success of 1Malaysia succession, the Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak's main policy.

Today, there are hundreds of social networking sites operating. Some of them are popular in certain countries while others have global reach. Some of these sites are targeted at very specific interest groups while others are general in nature. One of the best examples of a special interest social network is *LinkedIn*, a very popular social network for business executives. The popular general social networks are sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Friendster*, *MySpace*, *Blogger* and many more. No one predicted the extent and impact of social networking at such a phenomenal scale. The current most popular social networking

site in the world is *Facebook*. It has grown into more than 300 million active users with an average of 50 percent of them logging on to *Facebook* per-day. It is similar to *Friendster* and started with an emphasis on the college community (Ishak, 2010, p. 51). *Facebook* just grew in popularity and now reaches the number of adults on *Facebook* dwarfs that of college students. It has become the *de facto* social network for the English speaking world where at least 8 billion minutes are spent on *Facebook* each day. One of the reasons *Facebook* is so addictive is because it is a convenient way to track the status of friends. However, even before the explosion of *Facebook* and its likes, there were weblogs, or blogs for short; making them the first real social networks (Ishak, 2010, p. 51).

Nine of the Top 20 websites in Malaysia according to Alexa are social networking sites. The top 6 sites are *Yahoo!*, *Facebook*, *Google.com.my*, *YouTube*, *Google.com*, and *Blogger*. Malaysians consume digital media heavily according to the Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey on entertainment media usage. The sampling is based on 26,000 online users (including 500 Malaysians) from 52 countries. The survey defined digital media as video (movie, TV show, music video, short video), audio and video games. Malaysians ranked very high in this survey. They were No. 5 in digital media consuming nation and the third ranked nationality in spending over 20 hours a week watching streamed or downloaded content from the Internet (Ishak, 2010, p. 52). An article published in *the Star* newspaper by David Gibson, managing director of Inter.Asia Communications, says that social media is very big in Malaysia and will grow bigger over time. According to that article, there are 17 million Internet users in Malaysia in 2010. These users belong to a variety of social networks. They actively consume and adapt information, and have a sense of global culture (Ishak, 2010, p. 52).

One example, *Facebook* fan pages highlighting political rallies and civil society forums, as well as *Twitter* exchanges with lawmakers, have reshaped the reporting landscape. Premesh Chandran, *Malaysiakini* Chief Executive Officer, argues that 'All our reporters have *BlackBerrys* (smart phone) and use that to follow these tweets. The social media have changed the way journalists work in fundamental ways' (Bose, 2011, p. 1). He said that the new immediacy hampers government attempts to 'spin' or control a story as journalists get real-time reaction from the opposition and experts and use it to seek an immediate response from officials. With the advent of *Twitter*, politicians from both sides of the aisle freely disseminate their views, so much so that legislators have been known to take debates out of the chamber and continue them on *Twitter*. Social media also have a knack of eliciting more candid commentary than politicians would usually choose to put in a regular news release. That phenomenon was on display in August 2010 when Khairy Jamaluddin, influential leader of the ruling party's youth wing, gave a quick response to a government decision not to drop a ban on students joining political parties. Khairy said that 'Cabinet decision not allowing university students to be involved in political parties is gutless and indicates outdated thinking,' in a much-discussed tweet (Bose, 2011, pp. 1-2). Opposition politician Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad tweets daily on his constituency work. He lists all his public events on *Facebook* and even carries out interviews and dialogs online. He said that:

Social media definitely gives the opposition and alternative voices a space to express our views without censorship.... The limitation is that we are restricted to 140 characters on Twitter, so we can't really flesh out many of the arguments and positions, but it at least allows people and the media to read and understand our perspective. (Bose, 2011, pp. 1-2)

Malaysians have flocked to the Internet for news and views, a phenomenon credited with the opposition's stunning performance in the 2008 General Election when the government lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority for the first time. Reporters Without Borders' regional correspondent Patrice Victor said that the Malaysian experience could be replicated in other countries as they develop a potent combination of repressive governments and reasonable Internet access (Bose, 2011, p. 2).

Although Malaysian governments realise the importance of free cyberspace and they do not want to hamper the phenomena for market reasons, they have attempted to regulate and dictate its proper use politically. One of the reasons is that the social media is so popular to the Generation Y. The government does not want to get backlash from Generation Y if it attempts to block or censor the Internet.

PERCEPTION ON MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG GENERATION Y

Nadchatram (2007) argued that the Generation Y youths are in the process of becoming the world citizens of tomorrow. Media should have the responsibility to ensure that the youths are protected as well as informed both intellectually and emotionally. More than one year after the election, one research had been conducted in studying perception of Generation Y towards media and political participation. A research entitled 'Media and Participation among Youth in the Marginalized Communities' was awarded to Universiti Utara Malaysia and was conducted by all authors of this paper from September until November 2014. In terms of the demography of respondents in the survey, they represent all age groups of youth under the category of Generation Y with a total number of 1,029 respondents. The age group of 19-20 has the highest representation (33.5%) followed by the age group of 17-18 (23%). The remaining age groups are also well represented as shown in Table 2. In terms of gender, the difference between male and female respondents is considerably small, hence it can be said that the survey is almost equally represented by both genders. As for the respondents' race, the majority of them are Malays (69.4%). Nonetheless, there are also representatives from other races, including Chinese (5.2%), Indians (3.1%), and *Bumiputera* (sons of the soil) in Sabah and Sarawak (19.8%). The data on religion shows that the majority of respondents are Muslims (81.0%), followed by Christians (12.1%), Buddhists (4.2%) and Hindus (2.5%).

Table 2: Respondents' demography

Items	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	464	45.1
Female	565	54.9
Total	1029	100.0
<u>Age group</u>		
15-16	113	11.0
17-18	240	23.3
19-20	345	33.5
21-22	180	17.5
23-24	117	11.4
25	34	3.3
Total	1029	100.0
<u>Race</u>		
Malay	714	69.4
Chinese	54	5.2
Indian	32	3.1
Iban	58	5.6
Bidayuh	13	1.3
Melanau	8	0.8
Dayak	6	0.6
Berawan	1	0.1
Brunei	6	0.6
Kadazan	13	1.3
Bajau	22	2.1
Dusun	64	6.2
Murut	12	1.2
Others	26	2.5
Total	1029	100.0
<u>Religion</u>		
Islam	833	81.0
Christianity	125	12.1
Buddhism	43	4.2
Hinduism	26	2.5
Others	2	0.2
Total	1029	100.0

Based on the result, it also shows that most respondents were using mobile phones (569) and computers (239) frequently. The result also shows that the importance of conventional media such as TV (broadcasting), newspapers, and radio should not be underestimated as a substantial number of the respondents are still using them frequently or occasionally. Details are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Type and frequency of media used

Type of Media	Frequency of use				
	Never	Sometimes	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Mobile/ smart phones	25	84	153	198	569
TV	36	149	286	276	282
Computer/ notebook/ laptop	65	190	290	245	239
Newspaper	94	283	396	154	102
Radio	95	289	359	186	100
Tablet/ iPad/ iPod	331	286	212	103	97
Magazines	173	322	384	98	52

The respondents also provide feedback regarding the most popular social media they use and their frequencies. The result as presented in Table 4 reveals that there are at least seven major social media tools used by the respondents which are WhatsApp, Facebook, Google+, WeChat, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. Among these, WhatsApp and Facebook are the most popular tools used by respondents where more than 50% respondents use them frequently. Surprisingly, Google+, Wechat, and YouTube are also popular among the respondents overtaking Instagram and Twitter.

Table 4: Type and frequency of social media used

Type of social media	Frequency of use				
	Never	Sometimes	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
1. Whatsapp	256	62	104	166	441
2. Facebook	41	136	283	228	341
3. Google+	63	101	284	250	331
4. Wechat	300	92	142	170	325
5. YouTube	369	90	188	190	192
6. Instagram	549	81	119	107	173

7. Twitter	601	101	119	94	114
8. Skype	750	97	79	51	52
9. Viber	902	41	27	26	33
10. Telegram	916	31	32	17	33
11. Blog	769	93	91	51	25
12. LinkedIn	904	21	35	21	18
13. Tumblr	942	29	31	12	15
14. MySpace	923	55	28	10	13

The respondents were also asked about their involvements in social, political and economic activities. There are fourteen items in this section (refer to Table 5) which uses five-level Likert scale responses namely; never (1), rarely (2), occasionally (3), frequently (4) and very frequently (5). The result shows that respondents are not actively involved in all activities where the mean scores for all these items are below 3.0. There are two activities which receive highest mean scores which are “share the current news/information/opinions via social media with family/friends on the social/political/economic issues” (mean = 2.88) and “obtain information about social/ politics/economic issues” (mean = 2.88). This finding could be an eye opener to the government and relevant agencies because of the low level of respondents’ involvement in social and political activities.

Table 5: Respondents’ online social and political activities

Activities	Scale	Mean	Min	Max	STDEV
1. Share the current news/information/ opinions via social media with family/ friends on the social/political/economic issues		2.88	1	5	1.22
2. Obtain information about social/ politics/economic issues		2.88	1	5	1.21
3. Organize activities that help local society		2.08	1	5	1.14
4. Follow social activities while at school/ college/university/working place		2.48	1	5	1.16
5. Spread messages/comments/articles on social/politics/economic issues		2.25	1	5	1.20
6. Follow the news of current issues in and outside country		2.83	1	5	1.20
7. Volunteer to help society		2.13	1	5	1.12
8. Contribute energy, ideas and money in empowering youth		2.02	1	5	1.10

activities				
9. Involve in community activities organized by other parties/government/ NGO	1.98	1	5	1.13
10. Write own blog about social/political/ economic issues	1.69	1	5	1.05
11. Share the latest issues with others	2.71	1	5	1.22
12. Access social media to know about social/political/economic issues	2.65	1	5	1.31
13. Disseminate information about social event/programmes such as political/religious talks/sports/communal work	2.28	1	5	1.23
14. Participate in event/program where I can express opinion on social/political/ economic issues	2.00	1	5	1.16

This research also presents the result of the respondents' perception on the role of new media or social media. There are fifteen items used for this section which are based on a five Likert scale responses of; strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). From the results as shown in Table 6, majority of respondents agree to the statements that new media is the choice of youth today (mean = 3.97) and the use of smart phones provides convenience in doing work, in getting information and in communicating (mean = 3.98). In addition, most of them also believe that sharing of information becomes easier/more comfortable/more attractive through new media. Despite this, most participants are aware of the fact that some information provided via new/social media is dubious (mean = 3.62). Interestingly, majority of the participants (mean=3.55) perceive that views from youth through new/social media are desirably be recorded and considered before the government/ administration make any decision in the development of the country. In other words, they want their voices to be heard by the government in the process of decision and policy making. Furthermore, most of them (mean = 3.53) also believe that youth in Malaysia require special space and programs through new/social media to enable them to participate and give opinion on the development of the country. This means that apart from requesting their voices to be heard, they also request for a platform to get engaged in the decision making process.

Table 6: Perception on the role of new media or social media

Scale	Mean	Min	Max	STDEV
Activities				
1. New media is the choice of youth today	3.97	1	5	1.08
2. The use of new media and social media has	3.71	1	5	1.10

potential to contribute to the sensitive issues related to religion, culture and race				
3. I am more convinced of the truth of information through conventional media	3.30	1	5	1.10
4. The use of smart phones provides convenience in doing work, in getting information and in communicating	3.98	1	5	1.07
5. Conventional media pay less attention to youth	3.16	1	5	1.09
6. Sharing of information becomes easier/ more comfortable/more attractive through new media/social	3.80	1	5	1.07
7. Conventional media content is controlled and censored more	3.35	1	5	1.08
8. Many of the information through new/social media is dubious	3.62	1	5	1.08
9. Information through conventional media is more reliable than new/social media	3.30	1	5	1.09
10. Space for youth to voice and provide views through conventional media is limited	3.31	1	5	1.08
11. The cost of using the new media is a burden	3.11	1	5	1.16
12. New/social media provide space for me to express dissatisfaction about the current issues to the government or non-government entities	3.15	1	5	1.16
13. I have used new media such as news portals, TV streams (e.g. KiniTV, SelangorTV) and radio streams (e.g. hitz.fm, ikim.fm) to give opinion or received information	2.86	1	5	1.00
14. Youth in Malaysia require special space and programs through new/social media to enable them to participate and give opinion on the development of the country	3.53	1	5	1.15
15. Views from youth through new/social media are desirably be recorded and considered before the government/ administrative make any decision in the development of the country	3.55	1	5	1.15

Overall, the youths were a little bit sceptical on the new media but they believe that the new media can be the tool for youth to engage more with the government. The main issue now in Malaysia is the lack of engagement between the government and youth which leads to the unsuccessful policy on youth previously. Therefore, youth should be empowered to participate more on the policy-making agenda.

CONCLUSION

People have given a mandate yet again to the BN to rule Malaysia. Based on the analysis, BN managed only to win with small majority. It is clear that the urban factors contributed a lot for the performance of PR as well as BN. The 13th General Election was definitely a social media election. Although the social media was not the determinant factor in the overall election results, it obviously played a significant role in giving space, channel and avenue for people or electorates to debate and engage with political leaders and candidates in the election. The main contributor for the result is Generation Y who utilised extensively the social media for their benefit in the general elections.

In Malaysia, Generation Y believes that their concerns were not addressed well by the government. Generation Y faces many challenges which require the government to take specific measures, policies and attention in order to avoid them to become marginalised. All youth issues require the youth participation in decision making process. The media coverage on these issues is essential to give awareness to the public and government about the important of tackling these issues. The media can work together with the youth from Generation Y in tackling these issues via media intervention programmes operated by the Generation Y themselves. The government should show their seriousness as well in engaging the Generation Y in resolving or at least reducing their problems.

Overall, Generation Y has definitely transformed the society bringing with them a more critical approach of politics by using social media as their channel for engagement. It is a challenge for all political parties. In order to win the election, they have to engage the Generation Y. Two general elections in 2008 and 2013 were the proofs that Generation Y is very powerful and can transform the society. We believe that this scenario will be prolonged to the future general election because Generation Y will continue registering themselves as new voters and will give significant impact in the election. The good thing is that our future leaders would definitely come from this group and we know that they are smart, educated, technology savvy, and professional which are good recipes for producing excellent Malaysian leaders in the future.

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